

1           1.    A method comprising:  
2                enabling a component to connect to a network  
3    through a software layer; and  
4                using the layer to accommodate at least two  
5    different types of network connections.

1           2.    The method of claim 1 wherein enabling a  
2    component to connect to a network includes enabling a  
3    component to connect through an interface to the Internet.

1           3.    The method of claim 1 including using the layer  
2    to accommodate for a dial up connection and a digital  
3    subscriber line.

1           4.    The method of claim 1 including allowing at least  
2    two components to use a connection to the Internet at the  
3    same time, determining when both components have released  
4    the connection and discontinuing the connection when both  
5    components have released the connection.

1           5.    A method comprising:  
2                allowing at least two software clients to use a  
3    connection to the Internet at the same time;  
4                determining when both clients have released the  
5    connection; and

6                   discontinuing the connection when both clients  
7   have released the connection.

1           6.    The method of claim 5 including enabling said  
2   clients to connect to the Internet through a software layer  
3   and using the layer to accommodate at least two different  
4   types of Internet connections.

1           7.    The method of claim 5 including monitoring the  
2   connection so that the connection is not released until all  
3   clients using the connection have released the connection.

1           8.    The method of claim 5 including monitoring the  
2   connection for a connection failure.

1           9.    The method of claim 5 including receiving a  
2   request from a client for a connection and determining  
3   whether a connection has already been established.

1           10.   The method of claim 5 including providing a state  
2   machine having a busy state when the connection is being  
3   used by a client and an idle state when the connection is  
4   not being used by a client.

1           11.   An article comprising a medium storing  
2   instructions that enable a processor-based system to:

3           enable a component to connect to a network  
4 through a software layer; and  
5           use the layer to accommodate at least two  
6 different types of network connections.

1           12. The article of claim 11 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 enable a component to connect through an interface to the  
4 Internet.

1           13. The article of claim 11 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to use  
3 the layer to accommodate for a dial up connection and a  
4 digital subscriber line.

1           14. The article of claim 11 further storing  
2 instructions to enable the processor-based system to allow  
3 at least two components to use a connection to the Internet  
4 at the same time, determine when both components have  
5 released the connection and discontinue the connection when  
6 both components have released the connection.

1           15. An article comprising a medium storing  
2 instructions that enable a processor-based system to:  
3           allow at least two software clients to use a  
4 connection to the Internet at the same time;

5           determine when both clients have released the  
6 connection; and  
7           discontinue the connection when both clients have  
8 released the connection.

1       16. The article of claim 15 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 enable the clients to connect to the Internet through a  
4 software layer and use the layer to accommodate at least  
5 two different types of Internet connections.

1       17. The article of claim 15 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 monitor the connection so that the connection is not  
4 released until all clients using the connection have  
5 released the connection.

1       18. The article of claim 15 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 monitor the connection for a connection failure.

1       19. The article of claim 15 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 receive a request from a client for a connection and to  
4 determine whether a connection has already been  
5 established.

1        20. The article of claim 15 further storing  
2 instructions that enable the processor-based system to  
3 implement a state machine having a busy state when a  
4 connection is being used by the client and an idle state  
5 when the connection is not being used by the client.

1        21. A system comprising:  
2            a processor;  
3            a network interface coupled to said processor;  
4 and  
5            a storage storing instructions that enable the  
6 system to enable a component to connect to a network  
7 through a software layer and use the layer to accommodate  
8 at least two different types of network connections.

1        22. The system of claim 21 wherein the storage stores  
2 instructions that enable the component to connect through  
3 an interface to the Internet.

1        23. The system of claim 21 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions to enable the processor to use the  
3 layer to accommodate for a dial up connection or a digital  
4 subscriber link.

1        24. The system of claim 21 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions that enable the system to allow at  
3 least two components to use a connection to the Internet at  
4 the same time, determine when both components have released  
5 the connection and discontinue the connection when both  
6 components have released the connection.

1        25. A system comprising:  
2            a processor;  
3            an interface to enable a connection to the  
4 Internet; and  
5            a storage storing instructions that enable at  
6 least two software clients to use a connection to the  
7 Internet at the same time, determine when both clients have  
8 released the connection and discontinue the connection when  
9 both clients have released the connection.

1        26. The system of claim 25 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions that enable the client to connect to  
3 the Internet through a software layer and use the layer to  
4 accommodate at least two different types of Internet  
5 connections.

1        27. The system of claim 25 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions to enable the system to monitor the  
3 connection so that the connection will not be released

4 until all clients using the connection have released the  
5 connection.

1 28. The system of claim 25 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions to monitor the connection for a  
3 connection failure.

1 29. The system of claim 25 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions to enable the system to receive a  
3 request from a client for a connection and to determine  
4 whether a connection has already been established.

1 30. The system of claim 25 wherein said storage  
2 stores instructions to implement a state machine having a  
3 busy state when a connection is being used by a client and  
4 an idle state when the connection is not being used by a  
5 client.